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THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE  
OF THE  
SERMON ON THE MOUNT

BY THE REV.

CHARLES GORE, M.A.

PRINCIPAL OF THE PUSEY HOUSE, AND FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, OXFORD

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## THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.<sup>1</sup>

THE Bible is, as a literature, unrivalled in giving expression to the true relation of the society to the individual. It presents an ideal of Christian, *i.e.* truly human, society in which the social pressure and the reaction of the individual character and conscience are in a just equilibrium. It emphasizes authority over the individual man. It emphasizes also the sanctity of the individual personality, the inalienable responsibilities and rights of the individual, as a being of action and of thought.<sup>2</sup> The Roman Church may have emphasized the element of authority in the New Testament, and Protestantism the element of liberty, but, in fact, both are there, to receive frank and adequate recognition. Both are there, because already, outside the region in which Christ is known, both are elements

<sup>1</sup> This article is, in substance, a lecture delivered on March 29th, in St. Paul's Chapter House.

<sup>2</sup> For the authority of the Church over the individual, see St. Matt. xvi. 19; xviii. 18, where the "binding" and "loosing" is the action of legislative authority; St. John xx. 23, where the forgiving and retaining sins is the action of disciplinary authority as applied to persons. The legislative authority is exhibited in action in Acts xv. 28, 29; 1 Cor. vii., viii.; 1 Tim. v. 14-16, etc.; the disciplinary in Acts v. 1-11; 1 Cor. v. 1-13 ("judging those within"); Titus iii. 10, etc.

On the other hand, our Lord's method with men exhibits the very opposite of a despotic form of authority: see *Bampton Lectures*, 1891, on "The Incarnation of the Son of God" (John Murray), lect. viii. He shows the profoundest respect for individuality; He makes the deepest requirements on personal effort in apprehending truth. Again, there is in the New Testament a constant recognition of the capacity of *all men* to rise to full Christian knowledge (Col. i. 28; 1 John ii. 20), and of the independence of the "spiritual man" (1 Cor. ii. 15). A moderate ideal of the exercise of authority is exhibited in such passages as 2 Tim. ii. 23-26. There is a constant appeal to "the tradition," to reason, and to conscience, rather than to discipline *per se*. There is a frank respect for legitimate liberty as expressed in Rom. xiv., and a dread of not merely Jewish ordinances, but all such ordinances as represent a Judaic bondage (Col. ii. 16-23).

in the moral progress of mankind. The moral conscience, as St. Paul describes it in those who "have no law" (Rom. ii. 15), is both social and individual; it is an individual "conscience bearing witness" to the moral will of God, and "mutual reasonings" among men "accusing or else excusing" one another—that is, a social conscience brought to bear upon the individual.

Man, then, is social and individual. And a man on the way of redemption, a believer in Christ, is an individual member of a great society, or kingdom,—the catholic Church; under the authority of the Church with its powers of legislation and discipline—its power of the keys, its authority to bind and loose,—but not under its authority in an arbitrary sense; because its authority extends only to applying the law of its Master, whom the man's own conscience has recognized and adored, and who Himself exhibited so careful a respect for human individuality.

I am concerned now, not with the wide subject of Christian authority and liberty, but with a particular form of Christian authority, namely, the authority which the Church ought to exercise in matters of social morality; and that, with special reference to the Sermon on the Mount, considered as supplying the fundamental moral law of our Lord's kingdom.

The Church at large, and each national or local Church, is to be a society binding and loosing in the name of Christ: that is—so far as concerns morality—adapting Christ's moral teaching to the circumstances of each age and place; declaring this to be lawful and that to be unlawful; and applying these abstract principles to individuals in moral discipline, admitting this one and excluding that one, suffering this one to continue in the privilege of membership and refusing to suffer that one absolving and retaining sins. This ecclesiastical discipline in matters of morality has mainly, in later Church history, and among ourselves, come to be—when it has been exercised at all—a private matter; and we have had, in this respect, much controversy in the English Church about the rightful position of confession to a priest, penance, and absolution. But in this

discussion, as to one application of Church discipline, the primary principle has become obscured. We take sides as to the function of the priesthood in the matter, or the danger of priestcraft, and leave out of sight what is the prior question—viz., the prerogative and duty of the Church as a society.

No one, with his eye on the New Testament and the earliest records of the Church, can deny that the Church was, and was by Christ intended to be, a society with a common moral law, which was to be constantly and authoritatively reapplied by way of legislation in general principle, and applied by way of discipline to individuals, in admitting them or refusing to admit them into the Christian society, retaining or refusing to retain them in membership.

This function of the Church in moral legislation for its members has been lamentably obscured: in part because, in the concentration of interest in the Western Church upon the discipline of the confessional, *casuistry*, which is the application of the general law to particular cases, has been developed almost entirely with a view to absolving individuals. It has thus become—necessarily, indeed, and rightly for its own right purposes—not an enunciation of how Christ would have men act, but rather a statement of the minimum requirement, the easiest terms on which a priest can give absolution to a penitent; or even, when misused, an attempt to evade the plain meaning of the moral law so as to keep slack consciences within the terms of Christian communion. “The first object,” writes Macaulay, truly of certain Jesuit casuists, “was to drive no person out of the pale of the Church. Since there were bad people, it was better they should be bad Catholics than bad Protestants. If a person was even . . . a bravo, a libertine, or a gambler, there was no reason for making him a heretic too.” The solemn words of Bishop Butler’s sermon *Upon the Character of Balaam* have their application to the Church, as to the individual conscience. “Those courses, which, if men would fairly attend to the dictates of their own consciences, they would see to be corruption, excess, oppression, uncharitableness; these are refined upon—things were so and so circumstantiated

—great difficulties are raised about fixing bounds and degrees ; and thus every moral obligation may be evaded. There is scope, I say, for an unfair mind to explain away every moral obligation to itself.”

Amongst ourselves, the disastrous identification of Church and State, which has allowed the Church to lose its free legislative functions within its own sphere, has altogether obscured, among ordinary Church-people, the sense that there is a social law binding upon their consciences—as in matters of matrimony or of commercial dealings—which is distinct from, and which goes beyond, the law of the State.

How are we to set about applying a remedy to this evil ? In the way in which it has been actually in great measure remedied in other departments of Church life. The distinctive theological doctrines of the Church have largely, in recent years, come to be recognized afresh through the voluntary combination of Churchmen to assert their principles and put them into practice. The same course must be pursued in regard to the Christian moral law. We must get genuine Christians together to think out for themselves, and formulate for their own guidance, the moral law of Christ, as applied to modern conditions. Then a clearer Christian public opinion will form itself, and it will prevail among Churchmen, as theological opinion has prevailed ; and the Church will stand out again, in the public eye, as a body which has a clearly understood moral code, for politics and business and society, as it has a clearly understood creed. This is, at any rate, the preliminary step towards the revival of legitimate discipline. At present, we have a great many earnest followers of Jesus Christ in all classes of society, but no adequate organization of Christian moral opinion.

There is indeed in some matters of public policy, external or internal, a vigorous “non-conformist conscience,” on the opium trade, for instance ; there is a vigorous Church conscience, as on other subjects, so especially on the pastoral care for souls and on the relief of the poor : but there is not an adequate organization of Christian moral opinion, or, specially, of Church opinion, on such matters as concern the life of commerce, or the

distribution of wealth, on the principle of justice, or the mutual obligations of classes to one another. I will return to this subject before I conclude.

Let us, then, who wish to be servants of Jesus Christ at whatever cost, because there is nothing else in the world worth being, place ourselves again at the feet of our Master, as He sits conspicuous upon the mount and opens His mouth to teach us the moral law of His kingdom. This can be done only by constant and zealous private meditation on His words. But I would endeavour now to call your attention, *first*, to what seem to be some leading principles in His moral *method*, and, *secondly*, to some leading features in the moral contents of His doctrine.

## I.

(a) Our Lord demands, not conduct merely, but character. He says, not "Blessed is he who does this or that," but "Blessed is such and such a character." But, on the other hand, the character is described as it finds expression in particular, detailed acts—"turning the left cheek," "giving the cloak also," etc. Many considerations require us to interpret these acts in their principle, not in their details. Thus, for instance, no man has ever struck me on my right cheek, as far as I remember; or taken my coat; or compelled me to go a mile on the public service: but I am not therefore free hitherto from the observance of these precepts. They express principles. But—this is what I want to emphasize—our Lord expresses the principle in the detail, and this means that he requires the Christian character to find expression in like acts, as overt, as definite, as detailed. The vast danger is that we should avail ourselves of a popular misinterpretation of St. Paul's language, and observe these precepts, as we say, "in the spirit,"—which is practically not at all in the actual details of life. Christ bids us do particular, overt, characteristic acts, such as express publicly, though not with publicity as our motive, the inward fact that we are not anxious about our own interests, and that we are trampling on our pride. Therefore we must apply Christ's teaching in detail to the circumstances of our day. This may be said to constitute in great measure the prophetic or preach-

ing office of the Church. But, in fact, the preacher is usually content with generalities. Why ? In part, no doubt, because he lacks courage to say what will be disagreeable to his congregation. In part, also, from the more respectable motive—that he is afraid to make ignorant suggestions which will do harm. A curate fresh to the country, distressed with the amount of agricultural work which he found going on on Sunday, once suggested to his flock that they might at least be content with milking their cows *once* on the Sunday. We are afraid to make like mistakes in speaking on the morality of business or of traffic in stock. We want more exact moral knowledge. For the sake of brevity, let me leap to a conclusion which will make my drift apparent. It is that we need consultation among small bodies of representative Christians, who know exactly what life means in schools and colleges, in athletic contests, in business, in workshops, in political life, in law courts, so that a central public conscience of the Church may be deliberately formed as to the sort of typical acts and refusals to act in which the Christian spirit must exhibit itself in the various situations of life.

(b) Our Lord lays down laws for a *kingdom*, a society ; but He seeks the establishment of the society through the sanctification of the individual, according to the law “ For their sakes I sanctify myself,” and in view of the fact that each man, as “ fallen,” needs individual regeneration and sanctification before he can enter upon his heritage of sonship and brotherhood. Thus, in the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord aims at a social end by laying a severe claim on the individual character. This is, I think, the explanation of the difficulties presented by such a passage as chap. v. 38-42 :—

“ Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth : but I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil : but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.”

“ Surely,” people say, “ society would be undone if I gave simply

to him that asked me, or rewarded the thief by bestowing on him more than he had taken, like ‘*le bon évêque, Bienvenu.*’” The answer is: Our Lord is here laying His requirement primarily on the individual life considered apart. | Elsewhere He provides for the social good, as such, as where He bids the offended brother carry his plaint first to the offender; then, if his conscience is not awakened, to a small group of Christians; at last, to the whole Christian body; and to proceed to an extremity in exacting and expressing moral judgment upon the wrong-doer (St. Matt. xviii. 15-18). | But this social judgment can only safely be put into practice by individuals who are themselves rising above the motives of personal pride or self-seeking. | Therefore, in any sphere where the individual profit or pride is concerned, or so far as in any transaction those considerations alone are concerned, we are to simply suppress our selfish selves, and “*lay ourselves in the dust to them that go over.*” When we are, in this sense, really meek personally, we can safely execute the Divine wrath socially, that is, we can be worthy, effective members of the kingdom of God.

Thus, throughout the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord is aiming at a social end, mainly through the elimination of selfishness, in its various forms of lust, pride, greed, ambition, censoriousness, out of the individual character.

Thus Christian effort for social improvement must always have its stronghold in the regeneration and sanctification of individual characters. True, there are social works which can be carried out without regard to this. When Lazarus was to be raised from the dead, it was the life-giving word of Christ alone which could impart life; but before it could find access to the tomb the stone had to be taken away: “*Take ye away the stone.*” Which things are an allegory. Christ alone, in direct, quickening grace, can restore the moral health of individuals, but there are preliminary obstacles to its influence to be removed. Bad dwellings, inadequate wages, inadequate education, inability to use leisure—these are stones which lie upon the graves of men spiritually dead. We must take away the stones. Only we shall not exaggerate what merely external reform is likely to accom-

plish. The real obstacle to social advance is selfishness or sin. No external reform will remove this. Nothing but the conversion of souls from self to God. Real social reform, then, will proceed, not by the method of majorities, but from small groups of sanctified men, like the apostles; and that is, in very truth, "the secret of Jesus."

(c) Our Lord here is speaking to the Church, not to the State; He is founding a society which is to subsist on moral sanctions, not material. If it is a socialism that is being established, it is a socialism of free choice, not State compulsion. It is true that this Christian society or brotherhood must needs have had an immense influence on State life: it must needs have become the very soul of the States among which it spread—as, in fact, the early Christians boasted that they were the soul of the empire. It must needs have become this, if for no other reason, then because the greater the number of individuals who have trampled on selfishness, and who seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, the easier becomes the process of legislation. So that, if all citizens were real Christians, legislation would be in abeyance, for heaven would be come—

“Where love is an unerring light,  
And joy its own security.”

But great as must needs have been the influence of Christianity upon the State and the obligation of Christians to the State, it is none the less true that Christ is legislating for a distinct society; not for humanity as it is, but for the humanity of redemption, "the brotherhood," the Church. The reason of this method is sufficiently plain. The fact is that, because humanity is spoiled by sin, it must be given a fresh start from a new centre, even Jesus Christ, who is the second Adam. The Church, where men are in very truth sons and brothers, is to be a sphere hedged in and kept distinct; a sphere wherein is realized what human life is meant to be, and, rightly dealt with, is capable of becoming. This is meant to have a double result. On the one hand, that Christians may learn from "love of the brethren," i.e. love in the narrower and select society, the wider love of

man—as St. Peter expresses it (2 Pet. i. 7), “In your love of the brethren supply love;” on the other hand, that the world may find in the Church “a city set on an hill,” a “light” to show it what human life may really be, a “salt” to keep it from corruption. That the Church is not the State and the State not the Church, is a truth we cannot realize too clearly. The Church, in fact, can only do its duty to the State, as salt or light, when its distinctiveness is kept in clear recognition. False methods of diffusion—attempts, like our Anglican attempt, to merge the Church in the State—have done incalculable harm. We must recall ourselves to the scriptural principle—which, I may add, is quite consistent with an ecclesiastical establishment, though some particular forms of establishment have somewhat imperilled it—we must emphasize the fundamental distinctiveness of the Church as a general truth.

And we are to apply this principle in single parishes and districts of human life by endeavouring to concentrate Church feeling, and to accentuate its moral meaning and requirements; we are really to “correct its tendency to diffusiveness,” if diffusiveness is to be purchased at the cost of intensity. “Ye are the salt of the earth”—a salt which purifies by distinctiveness, which influences by dissimilarity, which keeps up health by emphatic savour. I would strive that the Church in every parish should represent, not such and such a number of adherents, but the morally best, be they many or be they few, in every class; or, to put it more truly, those who are honestly striving after moral excellence, and ready to make sacrifices in its interests. The Church is not to represent public opinion, but to be the home of the best moral conscience of the community.

Upon “State Socialism” the Sermon on the Mount appears to have no direct bearing. It does not suggest that unselfishness is to be secured by any other than methods of moral pressure. But, on the other hand, the State is regarded by St. Paul as entrusted with the administration of Divine justice, and the officers of the imperial administration are regarded by him as bearing a priesthood of Divine service: they are “God’s ministers” to “attend continually upon this very thing” (Rom. xiii. 1-7).

## II.

If we turn from the moral method of our Lord to the *social principle* which the Sermon on the Mount expresses, we find it to be what may be broadly expressed as *the principle of the sonship and brotherhood of man as based on the Fatherhood of God*.

It is worth while pausing to notice how this great principle has the advantage of inclusiveness. Mr. Leslie Stephen, at the beginning of his *Science of Ethics*, rightly reminds us that a true theory is able to account for the prevalence of partial and even false systems, by bringing to light and giving scope for the element of truth which each contains. This note of a true theory is stamped upon the Christian ethics. The truth of individual hedonism—the truth that each single individual claims by an ineradicable instinct his own self-realization, his own happiness—Christianity recognizes: each man is to “come into possession of his own life;” he is “to see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied;” he is to “save his life.” The truth, again, of the older utilitarianism—that “each man counts one, and nobody more than one”—is at the heart of Christianity. The Christian is “to love his neighbour as himself,” because “with God is no respect of persons.” The principle, again, of modern evolutionist moralists, the recognition of the social organism, the search for the equilibration of the society and the individual—who can fail to find in this an echo of that language about the “one body” which Christianity at least made its own from the first? Once again, and for the last time, there is nothing upon which idealists spend themselves, so far as positive principles go, nothing in idealism, from the “hymn of Cleanthes” to the *Prolegomena to Ethics*, which Christianity does not fairly and strictly embrace. The worth and claims of the individual, the worth and claims of the society, the supra-social dignity and authority of the moral law,<sup>1</sup>—all this is of the

<sup>1</sup> There is a magnificent expression of this principle in a fragment of Cicero, *De Republica*, which is so little known that I venture to quote it. “There is a true

fabric of Christian ethics. But it has an altogether new pulse of life sent through it when the Fatherhood of God comes into recognition to make practicable a belief in the brotherhood of man, and give meaning to the sense of personal obligation in the relation of sons to a Father. I do not think that we bring out strongly enough the strength of the Christian ethical principle, considered philosophically, from the power which it has to account for more partial theories, and to integrate them in a completer whole which can make a more living appeal to human wills and hearts. But I must not do more than touch upon a subject capable of much expansion.

The fundamental Christian principle involves, among others, three subordinate principles, which shall be noticed here.

(a) *The principle of justice*—that each individual man is an end, and not a mere means; or, that each man counts one, and nobody more than one, to state the principle as Kant and Bentham respectively stated it. This principle of justice was admirably interpreted by Mr. Rashdall, in a recent number of this *Review*. It means, not equal position for each—for men are by nature inevitably unequal in capacity, and therefore in position—but equal consideration for each, free opportunity for each to realize his nature, to become what God meant him to be. Our neighbour is what we are, a child of God, and to be loved with the same considerateness as we rightly give to ourselves. “ All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them.”

law which is right reason, agreeable to nature, diffused among all men, constant, eternal, which calls us to duty by its injunctions, and by its prohibitions deters us from wrong; which upon the good lays neither injunction nor prohibition in vain; while for the bad, neither its injunctions nor its prohibitions avail at all. This law admits neither of addition nor subtraction nor abrogation. The vote of neither senate nor people can discharge us from our obligation to it. We are not to look for some other person to expound or interpret it; nor will there be one law for Rome and another for Athens, nor one at this date and another later on; but one law shall embrace all races over all time, eternal and immortal; and there shall be hereby one common master and commander of all—God, who originated this law, and proposed it and arbitrates concerning it; and if any one obeys it not, he shall play false to himself, and shall do despite to the nature of man, and by this very fact shall pay the greatest penalties, even if he should escape all else that is reckoned punishment.”

This principle of justice is one which is not approximately realized in what we call Christian society at present. It is comparatively few men who have a real opportunity of work and remuneration, according to their faculties, of spiritual knowledge, of legitimate education, physical and moral. Yet this every Christian ought to be able to claim, including what, without Christianity, he cannot have—the true knowledge of God and of His provision for man. Till this is secured, in the Christian society in its completeness, and in society as a whole as far as it falls within State functions, the Christian must not rest. But that gives us a great deal to do, through Parliament, through County Councils, as also by more directly ecclesiastical methods.

(b) *The principle of trust in God's Fatherhood.* God made man, and desires impartially man's good. "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good: and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." So long as man is doing his duty, God will provide for him, as for the birds of the air and the flowers of the field. Now, the birds and the plants accumulate to-day the resources which are to serve them hereafter. The birds could not hatch their eggs if they had not in due time previously built their nests. The flowers could not bring forth their bloom if they had not been accumulating their resources long before. But all this takes place without anxiety. Granted the fulfilling of function day by day, God will provide. The Christian society, then, recognizing this principle in the conscious life of man, is to know the limits of its responsibility. It did not create the world or found the Church. It cannot alter the predestined goal of the world's movement. But it can facilitate or thwart the purpose of God within its own area. The individuals who compose the Church can "lose their own lives" by refusing to co-operate with God or "save them" by taking part with Him. Here, then, is both the reality of responsibility and its limit. All we can do is joyfully to fulfil our duty and trust the providence of God. This means—only to touch on great subjects—that in commerce we shall resolutely do the will of God and abide by the consequences; in dealing with individuals, we shall not be more merciful than our Master, or attempt, as He did not

attempt, to save men in spite of themselves. We shall aim at appealing to men's wills and strengthening their sense of responsibility. We shall not, once more, be afraid of letting truth loose for fear of its causing havoc. We shall be ready to say in our turn, "I am not come to send peace on earth, but a sword."

The Christian has an immense advantage over other social reformers in the "clear knowledge" of God, as revealed in Jesus Christ. It is sometimes suggested that to "seek the face" of God and exactly study His character is to divert the faculties without profit from the really useful end of human improvement—

" . . . Presume not God to scan :  
The proper study for mankind is man."

What a shallow philosophy! For why is it that we make, in fact, so little social improvement? Why is it we are so falsely, ignobly tolerant of injustice, and selfishness, and lust in society and within ourselves? Why are efforts for the good of man so seldom persevered in through disappointment or so frequently allowed to degenerate into effortless routine? Why? In a word, because we do not think enough about God. If we constantly and systematically gazed up at Him, and let His inexorable holiness, His truth, His beauty, His love, His power—more than all, the claim of His Fatherhood over us His sons, penetrate our whole beings, we should be more vigorous and persevering in moral effort—ay, and more successful. It was the Apostles, who were so full of the vision of God, who turned the world upside down.

(c) *The principle of co-operation, not competition.* In every department of life Christians are to seek the good of all. The Church must carry this principle into all its transactions. It must be, in the fullest sense of the word, spiritually and physically, a profit-sharing company. This means (see 1 Tim. vi. 9) a stern discouragement of the accumulation of wealth, except as held consciously on trust for the public good; a strenuous opposition to the development of luxury, as distinct from knowledge and beauty; a constant practical realization of the temper of contentment with sufficient and wholesome food and lodgment, air,

and clothing, work and leisure, and of the greater blessing of giving as compared to receiving.

The principle of justice or equality of consideration ; the principle of God's Fatherhood, deepening and also limiting our responsibilities and our anxieties ; the principle of co-operation as contrasted with competition ;—these are the main principles, admitting, of course, of indefinite expansion, which I have only just had time to suggest. Upon these principles the Church is really to act ; and in order to this end I return to my earlier suggestion, that we need to concentrate Christian influence ; that we need to reorganize definite Christian centres of moral opinion, where Christ's principles are simply acted upon, so that a more concrete impression may be presented to men's mind of what the life of a Christian is in the various legitimate callings of society.

The suggestion may be worked out in detail thus :—

1. We need a careful organization of Christian moral opinion—that is, a new Christian casuistry. The new casuistry will be a formulating in detail of Christian moral duty, with a view to seeing, not how little a Christian need do in order to remain in Church communion, but how a Christian ought to act. It will need combined labour of experienced men, who are before all things Christians, in the different walks of life. I think it would be possible, perhaps for the Christian Social Union, to form small circles of representative men in each district, where special occupations prevail, or within the area of special professions, to draw up a statement of what is wrong in current practice, and of the principles on which Christians ought to act. A central body would meanwhile be formulating with adequate knowledge the general maxims of Christian living. I do not see why ten years' work should not give us a new Christian casuistry, that is a general and applied statement of Christian moral principles. To what better work could the Christian Social Union devote itself ? When it was done by private means, it might come under more official sanction.

2. So far as we have our Christian code now, or are on our way to get it, we shall league ourselves together to observe it.

I do desire that the Christian Social Union shall become a widely ramifying league, through all classes, of persons anxious before all else to prove to themselves, and so to others, that they really own Jesus Christ as their moral Master. They would, therefore, be bound to protect one another in cases where loyalty to principle means loss of work. And masters and men anxious to serve Jesus Christ would be drawn together. I believe we under-estimate, not over-estimate, the number of such persons.

3. We should do again what was done in the early monastic movement, as it is represented in St. Basil's rule. We should draw together to centres, both in town and country, where men can frankly start afresh and live openly the common life of the first Christians. This can, of course, be most easily done in the case of those who are deliberately celibate. There is much talk of brotherhoods. Forgive the expression of an ideal. I desire to see formed—not in interference with existing methods—a community of celibate men, living simply, without other life-vows than those of their baptism or (if priests) of their priesthood, the life of the first Christians: a life of combined labour, according to different gifts, on a strongly developed background of prayer and meditation, and with real community of goods, which, of course, would cease in the case of any persons who might leave the community. The details are not difficult to arrange. I have some experience such as warrants a belief that such an ideal might become real. Such a community, "continuing steadfastly in the apostolic doctrine and fellowship, the breaking of the bread and the prayers, and having all things common,"—such a community would surely be calculated to make men see how holy and happy a thing is Christian life when it can free itself from entanglements and begin again "au pied de la lettre." I say I have some experience warranting a belief in its possibility. A part of this experience lies in an association of unmarried priests, numbering some seventy men, who are bound together, not in community, but in observance of a rule such as naturally might lead on to, and form a background for, the sort of community I have described.

I have been speaking of the unmarried, and I have said that

the literal reproduction of the earliest Christian community-life is easiest in their case. But the same ideal needs application to married life also. I do not see why such an ideal as the Moravians have, in fact, realized, of companies of married people living by a common rule, should not be of immense power among ourselves. I have spoken of what lies within my own experience, but the principle is applicable to laity as to clergy, and to married as to single.

In a word, what I want to suggest is this. The moment has come for the Church, and more particularly for the Church of England, to put social morality, Christian living, in the forefront of its effort. At present, we are making much too much of the development of the outward exhibition of worship. We trust too much to church building and organizing of "plant." We try too much to "get people to come to church." We want, on the other hand, "to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness;" to consolidate Christian moral opinion in each district of Church life; to let it be known what Christian living means; to stand by one another in voluntary league to carry it out; to let its charity, its beauty, its attractiveness, its possibility be more apparent; to silence cynicism a little by the drawing together in groups and leagues of the life which already exists scattered and in isolation. I am sure I am not unduly optimistic. I hope I am not wholly unpractical.

CHARLES GORE.

P.S.—In a brief discussion which followed the reading of the above lecture, I was reminded that, besides the metaphor of "salt," our Lord used also the metaphor of "leaven" to describe the relation of the Church to the world; and that I had left out of sight the lessons which this latter metaphor would convey. There is a sense in which the Church is to merge itself in the society around it. To this I should only reply that it is the teaching of the former metaphor that we in England to-day most imperatively need. The latter we are not in so much danger of ignoring.

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